



# Holding a Shared Vision Steady

## Why go this route?

- To change a school takes the dedication and commitment of all stakeholders. Teachers can maintain islands of excellence within their classrooms, but to truly reform a school all must work together as a community of learners.
- How do you know you have arrived if you do not constantly focus on your destination?
- Roland Barth (in Improving Schools from Within, 1990) reasons that unless school practitioners develop their own vision to create a great school, they invite outsiders to mandate random changes for them. It's crucial that professionals who know kids and schools first hand be the generators of a truly compelling vision.
- Average principals keep the buses, budgets, and boilers humming. Good principals are warm and caring people. Great principals do and are all of the aforementioned plus they have focus, purpose, vision, and mission. (Elaine McEwan, 2003)

## You'll know you've arrived when...

- Indicators of Shared Vision are becoming actualized.
- Staff, students and community share in the development of the vision, commit to its implementation, and focus on its realization.
- The vision is translated into measurable grade level expectations and objectives.

## Construction Zone

This packet is for use by the building principal or the leader or the visioning team.

### It's about *TIME*

- "The fastest route to vision is data analysis and goal setting because these processes define and make the vision concrete." (Defour, 2000 in Schmoker, 2001)
- If you are new to the building, working on a climate of mutual support and trust must come first. Creation of a vision statement will take on real meaning only after that occurs.
- The process described in Insert 5 will take at least two full staff meetings and may extend over the first 2-4 months of the school year.


### Potential *COSTS*

- You might want an outside facilitator for Step 5. You might also trade places with a fellow principal to facilitate the discussion with each other's staffs for free.
- The final Vision Statement should be signed by all staff, framed and displayed. Consider printing the Statement at the top of note cards for staff, on posters for each room, or on a banner for the halls. An extensive, first-class publication of the Vision should be possible for \$500 to \$1,000.



## The Process

*A step-by-step guide  
to developing a shared  
school vision.*

**NOTE:** Steps marked with a  are accompanied by one or more inserts, included in this packet.

### 1 Identify your personal vision for your school.

What are the components of *your* ideal school? Grounding the rest of this work in the place where it speaks to your own heart will make the rest of these steps sing instead of stutter. Find a quiet place and use INSERT for Step 1 to invest an hour in that grounding for yourself.

### 2 State your core values and beliefs in a personal vision statement.

Check your statement carefully—are you ready to commit everything to this **VISION**? Sharing, monitoring, living the Vision will be the focus of all your efforts. If a task doesn't address the Vision, it becomes secondary to you! (Use Insert for Step 2.)

### 3 Begin to operate on your personal vision.

Live toward your own vision while you help the staff develop the shared Building Vision. Get systematic about scheduling time each day to work on your personal vision. Some of this will find its way into the school's shared vision below (in Step 6). Other parts may take time for you to bring the full staff to share, but you can work toward your larger vision starting now. INSERT for Step 3 offers some thoughts about how to do this.

### 4 Collect baseline data about key aspects of the school that might figure into a shared vision. It will be useful in Step 6 when you're ready to operationalize.

See INSERT for Step 4 for a list of possible factors. See MI-MAP Packet 4:2 "*Setting up Your Schoolwide Database*" for information on how to collect, organize and assess data. See MI-Map Packet 9:2 "*MS-Excel Projects for Schools*" for information about creating your own Excel files to collect and process data.

### 5 Lead the staff members in activities to discover their shared vision. (Insert for Step 5.)


You'll need uninterrupted, reflective time to do these exercises—many schools use summer retreat time before school starts.

### 6 Operationalize your vision by breaking it into goals and indicators.

Decide on your "milestones" to gauge progress and celebrate your accomplishments during the year. Think together with staff about how to hold each other accountable for the things that will make real meaning for you in your jobs. (See INSERT for Step 6)

### 7 Review building activities, customs, and programs in light of the vision.

Use the Building Vision as your guide and identify the value added of each activity, program and event. INSERT for Step 7 suggests a light-hearted way to "clean house" and make time and room for parts of the vision.



## Getting more mileage from Holding a Shared Vision Steady

*How holding a shared vision steady benefits your school in regards to the following initiatives:*

### **No Child Left Behind (NCLB)**

- “No Child Left Behind is now asking the principal to weave together the needs and demands of all the school stakeholders. These needs and demands create an environment where principals are accountable to these stakeholders in ways they may never have been before.” (K-12 Principals Guide to No Child Left Behind, National Association of Secondary School Principals, 2003)
- “NCLB views the environment in which children are educated as a contributing factor to their academic success and defines that environment as the school building. Thus, it becomes the principal's obligation to demonstrate a school's ability to provide a safe, healthy setting in which to learn.” (Ibid.)

### **Education YES!**

- The school profile data collected in Process Step 6 on the second page of this packet will enable the principal and leadership team to report elements necessary for completing the “Indicators of School Performance” section in Education Yes.
- The Ed Yes Report Card supplies feedback to parents and staff. It also requires that they work together to use information from the report to plan for improved student achievement. The “Indicators of School Performance” are based on the school's self-rating of the identified indicators. Success is more likely when all stakeholders share a common vision.

### **MI-Plan**

- In Step 1 (Readiness to Benefit) MI-Plan offers tools and steps to assist a school in analyzing and developing a vision and mission.



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## Resources

### Books

***Improving Schools from Within. Teachers, Parents and Principals Can Make a Difference.***

**Roland Barth. Jossey-Bass, 1991.**

Barth makes a clear case that the adults in the school are the most powerful sources for school change. Communication, collegiality and risk-taking are explored.

***Expectations: How Teacher Expectations Can Increase Student Achievement***

**Robert L Green. Alpine Guild. 2000**

Research that supports the critical importance of teacher expectations in effective urban education.

***Ten Traits of Highly Effective Principals.***

**Elaine K. McEwan**

A highly-useful “how-to” book for principals committed to excellence and to becoming instructional leaders.

***The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook***

**Peter Senge et al. Doubleday. 1994.**

This is a hands-on companion to the original Fifth Discipline as you move your organization toward being a learning organization together.

***Moral Leadership: Getting to the Heart of School Improvement***

**Thomas J. Sergiovanni. Jossey-Bass. 1996.**

The level of commitment necessary to turn around a high-priority school cannot be developed through legal mandates or management theory. Sergiovanni explains the importance of legitimizing emotion and getting in touch with basic values and connections with others.

### People

#### Specialists

Most Intermediate School Districts have a specialist working with schools on planning and leadership in their service areas.

#### Coaches

The *Alliance for Building Capacity in Schools* website lists coaches whose training has been provided by Michigan State University and supported by the Michigan Department of Education. Some are active in working with vision setting in Michigan schools. Please visit:

**[www.abcscoaches.org](http://www.abcscoaches.org)**

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